2: Elwin E-S (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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181 Pujāri for the shrine of Lingo Pen at Semurgaon and Pardhan minstrels and priests are to be found in some Muria villages. Pardhan boys and girls are admitted to membership of the ghotul.

I found *Nahar* at Kuntpadar and at Kabonga and neighbouring villages. Their boys and girls had joined the ghotul and were taking a leading part in its affairs. Elsewhere this tribe has a very low position: it is mainly to be found in the west Central Provinces and Berar and is regarded as derived from a mixture of Bhil and Korku.

III. The Muria

Kariya mur he manse ōn. We are the dark people.—Muria saying

The word 'Muria' is used in Bastar to mean, generally, an aboriginal. In this sense it has long been applied by State officials to all the primitive tribes except the Maria of the Abujhmar. In recent years the people themselves have also widely adopted it. Throughout the Dantewara Tahsil and in the Sukma Zamindari, the tribe which Grigson calls 'Bison-horn Maria' returned themselves as 'Muria' at the 1941 Census. There are also the Muria of the Jagdalpur Tahsil. There is thus a good deal of confusion about the proper classification of the Bastar aboriginals. Let me therefore say at once that when I use the term 'Muria' in this book, I apply it to the aboriginals of the Kondagaon and Narayanpur Tahsils whose culture centres round the ghotul. Grigson estimated that there were some 76,000 of these in 1931; there are about 100,000 now. [163]

The name Muria has been derived from *mur*, the palas tree, or from *mur*, a root.[1] There is no apparent reason why the Muria should be named after the palas tree, which is neither a totem, nor specially honoured by them, nor even common in their territory. But the derivation of the word from *mur*, a root, has much to commend it. *Mur* may also mean 'permanent', as in *mur poder*, a permanent or regular name as opposed to a nickname: the Muria, in contrast to the Hill Maria, have permanent settlements and dwellings.

Early writers were impressed by the industry and cleanliness of the Muria. They are good cultivators, said Sir Benjamin Robertson in 1891, 'active, hardy and well-behaved and their villages are generally clean and comfortable'.[2] Hislop describes them as more civilised than the Maria, forming 'the bulk of the agricultural population in the north and centre'. Beyond the eastern frontier, however, 'where they mix with the Khonds in Patna, Kharond and Jeypur, they are somewhat wilder and devoted to the chase'.[3]

184 We must now survey these Muria of the north, for they are not all of one family, and the differences between them are interesting and significant. I will begin with the western parganas, lying to the west and north of the great mass of the Abujhmar Hills. It is in these hills that the key to many a Muria custom will be found. The people of these parganas seem to be Hill Maria who first settled in the plains and then came under strong alien

[1] R. V. Russell and R. B. Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), Vol. III, p. 64.
[2] *Census of India, 1891*, Vol. XI, Part I, p. 186.
[3] S. Hislop, *Papers relating to the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces* (Nagpur, 1866), Part I, p. 22.

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influence from across the Chanda border. Their villages are a compromise between the communalism of the Maria and the individualism of the Gond; the houses are arranged in streets and open on to one another, but they have substantial independent gardens behind. The women often dress in almost Maria fashion, exposing the breasts, but wearing few ornaments, and the men imitate the fashions of the Chanda border. Ten years ago, at the time of a Satyagraha agitation, many of them bought Gandhi caps. These are still worn, but pulled out of all shape to make them politically respectable. The ghotul is used mainly by boys and men; in Maria fashion it is the centre of the male life of the village, a tendency which the external influences across the border tend to strengthen. 184

In the northern parganas, the Muria have many links with their fellows in Kanker State and the Drug District. There are ghotul in both these areas, but in Drug ghotul life has become furtive and obscene, strumpeted by the contagion of the plains. The people in these northern parganas look and dress like the Gond of the Central Provinces; they have no affinities with the Maria of the neighbouring Padalibhum, whom they regard with amused astonishment. But they have the ghotul system very fully developed, although some of them vehemently deny the fact at a first conversation.

To the east, the Antagarh and Amabera Parganas are very similar—the people in dress and manners akin to the Gond of the Central Provinces. Here the cult of Lingo is at its strongest, and the Muria appear to be immigrants from the north. Although the ghotul flourishes, the people here are perhaps the least attractive of the Muria, for they are suspicious, timid and ill-mannered.

There is a striking contrast between these drab and sullen northern Muria and the people south of Narayanpur. This is the country of the best, most beautiful, most charming of all the peoples of Bastar, the so-called Jhoria Muria. These Muria are, according to their own account, Maria of the Abujhmar who have settled in the plains. They have retained a great deal of their original Maria culture but, where they have altered, they have improved and developed it—an astonishing variant of the normal result of culture-change.

In Bastar, says Hislop, 'the Madias are also called Jhorias, probably from *jhodi*, a 'brook'.[1] Dalton, deriving the word Maria from the Gondi term for a tree, says the Maria 'are also called Jhoria, from *jhodi*, a brook. This is the name given to the gold-washers in Chutia Nagpur, who are in all probability Gonds likewise'. The word Jharia is found as the name of the wilder sub-divisions of several tribes in the Central Provinces,[2] and there is a section of the Poroja of Orissa called Jhoria.[3] I visited some Jhoria villages in Koraput District in 1944. They are an attractive people, with a fully developed megalithic culture and the village dormitory, but they bear no resemblance to the Bastar Jhoria. 101 184

The first to describe these 'Jhoorias' was Glasfurd who, writing in 1862, says that they 'are found principally in the north-western parts about Narayenpoor and Partabpore, and extend towards Kakeir; they are a numerous 184

1 Hislop, *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 7.

2 P. N. Bose gives Kolta or Jhoria among his classes of Gond, 'to which class', he says, 'the hill Gonds belong almost exclusively. Jhoria literally means "hungry".'—P. N. Bose, 'Chottisgur: Notes on its tribes, casts and castes' in *JASB.*, Vol. LIX (1890), Part I, p. 283.

3 *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. I, Part III B, p. 197. A note by M. W. M. Yeatts on the Poroja and Sooras. See also G. Ramadas, 'Porojas', *Man in India*, Vol. XI, p. 257, and E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), Vol. VI, pp. 209ff.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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● 184 class, and subsist partly by cultivation and partly by hunting and on the fruits of the forest. Their dress resembles that of the following caste, the Marias, with whom they may be said to constitute about a third or more of the population of the Bastar Dependency, and whom they resemble in customs and appearance.'[1] But in the 1891 Census only 936 people returned themselves as Jhoria; the 'numerous class' had probably by that time been merged in the Muria. Sir Benjamin Robertson writes of them that 'the Jhorias are more akin to the Marias than to the Murias; they resemble the former in dress and like them prefer a life in the woods to the attractions of a civilization even so mild as that of the Bastar country'.[2]

Unfortunately the word 'Jhoria' is no longer in general use, for it would have been a convenient term to describe this distinctive and delightful people. At the present time, some eighty years after Glasfurd wrote, the Muria of Partabpur do not seem to be properly classed with the 'Jhoria', nor should the word 'Narayanpur' be used in this connexion. Both in the Partabpur Tahsil and the immediate vicinity of Narayanpur, alien influence has been too strong; the characteristic signs of the Jhoria are there, but they are sadly weakened. At the present time, there are Jhoria living in the Ghat Jhorian, Jhorian, Baragaon, Narayanpur (except near the town), Dugal and Karangal Parganas, the west of the Benur Pargana, the east or plains area of the Chota Dongar Pargana, and the Mardapal, Chalka and a few villages of the Sonawal and Bamni Parganas in the Kondagaon Tahsil.

What are the characteristics of these Jhoria Muria? They are Hill Maria who have descended from the Abujhmar and have come into cultural contact, not with any 'superior' aliens but with a sympathetic and allied people. The Muria of the plains taught these Hill Maria to develop their ghotul system; hitherto they had confined it to boys and men—the plains Muria transformed it by admitting the motiari. The Muria taught them new dances, but preserved the old hill dances for the worship of the gods. Even these they developed, extending the monotonous Maria 'round' into a procession. The Gond of the north would have soon stripped off the feathers and profusion of bead necklaces and cowrie belts from their new neighbours; not so the Muria. The new and exciting theory of a 'co-educational' ghotul stimulated these Maria; it made them wash—the Jhoria are some of the cleanest people in Bastar, though their ancestral Maria are among the dirtiest; it awoke their artistic sense, impelling them to make ever better necklaces and combs, wooden supports for the hair of their motiari, tobacco pouches so carved that they would inform a girl at a glance of your intention.

It is impossible to say at this date whether the custom of erecting monoliths for the dead, the allocation of territory to each clan, the making of clan-gods, the observance of agricultural festivals spread through the Muria country as a result of Maria influence, or whether similar customs always existed and merely reacted on one another.

These Muria, even those so far away as in the Jhorian Pargana, say, 'We are Maria' and admit that they intermarry with the hillmen. They call their funerary rites 'a thing of the Maria Raj' and their special festival dances the 'Maria-endanna'.

It is always with a heavy heart that I bid farewell to these charming children of the foothills and turn to the Muria of the plains. Yet these Muria too have great and many virtues and a culture well worth our study. As we

[1] C. L. R. Glasfurd, *Report on the Dependency of Bastar*, 1862, par. 86.
[2] *Census of India, 1891*, Vol. XI, Part 1, pp. 182 and 186.

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INTRODUCTION

move into the Kondagaon Tahsil, into the Kongur and Sonawal Parganas, we find the influence of the Abujhmar steadily decreasing. The gay feathers disappear from the turban, the pretty headbands go from the brow; bells are still tied in Maria fashion over the buttocks for a religious dance, but the boys waggle them horizontally instead of in the striking and effective vertical rhythm of the hills. We begin to find marriages celebrated in the house of the bride instead of the bridegroom; on the other hand, the parade round the pole is done outside the marriage-booth in old Gond fashion instead of inside after the Hindu use. The ghotul theory changes a little. Probably the majority of Jhoria ghotul are of the older 'pairing-off' type, in which a chelik 'marries' a motiari and remains faithful to her. But now we begin to find the rule coming more and more into force that boys and girls must not combine in this fashion, but must change; a chelik is fined if he sleeps with the same girl for more than three days in succession. 184

A third cultural area extends from the middle of the Kondagaon Tahsil, past the hills of Bara Dongar, across the main road and away to the east and south towards the Jeypore boundary. The first area is that of the north, from Partabpur to Keskal, where there is a large admixture of Drug and Kanker Gond; the second is the area of the south and west, where the people are mainly Maria who have settled in the foothills; this third area may be called that of the aboriginal Gond of Bastar. The Muria of this part conform physically, as Grigson rightly says, 'more to the standard type of Central Provinces Gond than any other Koitor in Bastar; they are short in stature but well-proportioned, with roundish heads, flat noses, distended nostrils, ugly features, straight black hair and scanty beard and moustaches'.[1] Dress and fashions have become rather mediocre; there is not a trace of Maria influence. The girls wear cheap bazaar ornaments in the ears, no headbands, and none of the elaborate necklace-wear that is so beloved of the Jhoria. They put a few combs in their hair and sling a number of red and white necklaces about their necks. The boys sometimes put on a lot of red, white and black necklaces, but they seem to have none of the sense of colour that characterizes their brethren to the west. The ghotul system flourishes; there is perhaps a majority of the ghotul of the modern type. Round Kondagaon especially, the ghotul building is often out in the jungle with a small and secret door. Marriages are a curious blend of old Gond and new Hindu elements, but are generally more splendid in display and consistent in ritual than among the Jhoria, who only a few generations ago celebrated a wedding with nothing more than a dance and a heavy meal. Religion and worship have the misfortune to lack the magnificent Maria festal dancing; on the other hand, secular dances are much more varied and exciting. A few Hindu gods have crept into the pantheon and many villages engage low-caste Hindu drummers and trumpeters who torture the air with their cacophanies. But it should not be supposed that the Kondagaon Muria are more 'Hindulized' than those to the west. Hindu influence is still a very local matter: an ardent Hindu schoolmaster or forest-guard may influence the people of his immediate neighbourhood, but his effect does not travel far. Funerary customs, however, are almost universally on the Hindu pattern, though the practice of erecting memorial monoliths has not yet wholly disappeared.

The ghotul continues to exist immediately beyond the Bastar border at many points. In Kanker State there are still nearly 80 of these dormitories with a ghotul population of 1218. There are a few ghotul in the Chanda

[1] Grigson, op. cit., p. 42.

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and Drug Districts. How far the institution was distributed in former times must remain a mystery. Hislop describes the Gaiti Gond as 'calling themselves Koitars . . . Their chief peculiarity, which I have not found among common Gonds, though it may exist even among them, is to have in each village a separate tenement set apart for the occupancy of unmarried men during the night. This they call a *gotalghar* (empty bed house). In some villages there is a like provision made for the unmarried Gaiti women . . . When the Gaitis have returned in the evening from their work in the jungle, where they are very industrious in cultivation and cutting timber, all the families go to their respective houses for their supper, after which the young men retire to their common dwelling, where around a blazing fire, they dance for an hour or two, each having a small drum suspended in front from his waist, which he beats as he moves about while the young women sit at no great distance accompanying the performance with a song.'[1]

The Census of 1891 returned 5521 of these Gaiti who were then distributed in the Sakoli Tahsil of Bhandara (where they numbered 665), the Brahmapuri Tahsil of Chanda (215) and the north of Bastar (4535).[2] About this W. V. Grigson writes to me: 'The reference to Brahmapuri Tahsil dates back to the time before the separate Garhchiroli Tahsil was created. The reference therefore is probably to the people of the Garhchiroli Zamindaris such as Jharapara and Murramgaon, and possibly to the zamindaris of Karacha, Aundhi and Pannabaras now in Drug District which were in Chanda before the foundation of Drug. Some of these zamindaris border on Antagarh Tahsil and the local Gond is sometimes referred to as Maria and sometimes as Gaita, just as in Sironcha Tahsil the Hill Maria is sometimes called Gaita because his headman is known as the Gaita of the village.'

With all these differences do the Muria regard themselves as a single tribe? Can any Muria intermarry with any other Muria family? Do they eat together? Have they any connexion with the outside world?

Such problems as these are not easy to solve, for they do not often arise in practice and there are few precedents. Geographical factors tend to split the Muria up into roughly endogamous groups, but there is no rule about this. A Muria boy from the extreme west can go to a ghotul in the east of Kondagaon and find himself at home and perhaps find himself a wife. The ghotul is a fundamental bond, and in theory at least all Muria who have it as part of their culture can marry each other. In practice, the Jhoria Muria of the south-west do not often come into touch with the Gond Muria of the north and east, and marriages between them are rare.

As for different tribes and tribes outside Bastar—the Muria of the northern parganas often intermarry with the Kanker Gonds (who also have the ghotul system and are really Muria). The Jhoria Muria marry Hill Maria of the appropriate clans whenever geographical conditions allow them to do so. The same is sometimes true of the Muria of the Paralkot area. Those Muria who have migrated from Jeypore naturally marry their relations who have remained in the Orissa territory. Bindo, the old Muria leader of Benur, told me that 'we marry Kanker Gond and the Bhattra Muria of Jagdalpur (but not the Raja Muria) for we are of the same family; but now we live in the hills and they on the plains. Those who live near the Raja are the true Raja Muria, and they look down on us.' Bindo is here referring to the thirty or forty thousand Muria of the Jagdalpur Tahsil to the south of Kondagaon. These Muria have

[1] Hislop, op. cit., Part I, p. 22.
[2] *Census of India, 1891*, Vol. XI, Part 1, p. 183.

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PREFACE

121 This book is a contribution to social anthropology rather than to the study of crime. For many of the tragedies here are not crimes in any intelligible sense, though in our present state of dealing with such matters we treat them as if they were. In the second place, I have naturally approached the subject from the angle that was most familiar to me. I am neither an administrator, a lawyer nor a policeman. In dealing with crime this is a great disadvantage. It is specially so in India where these simple village crimes offer few problems of detection, and where it is impossible to study the general reaction of society through the columns of the daily press or in such revealing impulses of compassion as petitions for reprieve. It is only rarely that anything like a detective problem with clues and counter-clues is set for the police. It is equally rare for interesting points of law to arise during a trial. In the great majority of cases the accused confesses. But this does not mean that these aboriginal crimes have no importance. It is of absorbing sociological and psychological interest to study the reasons that drive unsophisticated primitive men to kill and wound their fellows; and their behaviour afterwards, as well as the conduct of everyone concerned, is of almost equal importance.

● 184 While I was collecting material for my book *The Muria and their Ghotul*, I was greatly struck by the difference in the incidence of crime between them and the great Maria tribe to the south. For homicide the annual incidence to the million is only 21 among the Muria, while it is 69 among the Bison-horn Maria; for suicide it is 22 against 53. In the last 10 years there have only been 21 Muria murders, and a large number of these have occurred either on the boundaries of the State or in the Mardapal Pargana in the extreme south of the Muria area, bordering on the Maria territory. The Muria differ from the Maria in the quite extraordinary absence of jealousy among them, in their lack of attachment to property and personal possessions, in their very strong civic and social instincts, in their gentleness and kindness. I believe that this difference is largely due to the

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184 existence among the Muria of the Ghotul or village dormitory, in which the boys and girls of the tribe grow up from childhood under a high degree of discipline and are trained in the tribal virtues. A system of what is practically pre-nuptial sexual communism teaches them from an early age the impropriety of jealousy. The habit of sharing everything all through childhood and youth in the dormitory weakens their individualistic attachment to personal property. The result is that several of the main causes of murder only lightly press upon them. The Bison-horn Maria probably had a similar dormitory club at one period and traces of it may still be found today. But it no longer exists as a social force, and the result is that the Maria—compared to their northern neighbours—grow up passionate and jealous, strongly attached to individual goods, undisciplined and revengeful. The Muria do not seem to consume any less
[273] alcohol than the Maria. Indeed the consumption of mahua spirit per head in the Muria area is higher than in the south. The Maria, however, drink more rice-beer, and there are many more cases of illicit distillation detected among them.

When my friend Mr A. N. Mitchell was Administrator of Bastar, he was troubled by this problem, and one day in conversation about it, one of us—I forget which—suggested that I might make some sort of survey of Maria homicides from my own independent angle. Mr Mitchell, with his unique zeal for everything affecting the life and welfare of aboriginals, gave me all possible facilities for my enquiry, and I was thus able not only to study official documents but also to visit the jail and discuss matters with many criminals.

101 The first task in my enquiry was to get at the records. I decided to confine myself to the exclusive study of the Bison-horn Maria, and here we were immediately faced by our first difficulty which was to decide who were to be included under this name. The name has come to be used in Bastar and in anthropology as a result of Mr W. V. Grigson's memorable book, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*. But it is not, of course, a word that is used by the people of themselves. Many of them now do not call themselves Maria at all. At the 1941 Census, thousands of Maria returned themselves as Maria, because they thought it sounded more respectable. Many others in the south have for some time

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I.P.C. Was the crime premeditated? Was it provoked by a serious and unbearable insult? The difficulty here, which every Sessions Judge admits, is that what seems an extreme provocation to him or the Assessors may hardly be noticed by the aboriginal, and incidents that seem quite trifling to the 'civilized' mind may rouse the Maria or Naga to a fit of homicidal rage. The matter is complicated by the fact that the tribes vary greatly from one to another. The Bison-horn Marias, for example, are passionately concerned about female chastity, and a wife's infidelity is constantly a cause of murder. But in this their Gond and Baiga neighbours to the north have a much lower standard. Love is comparatively free. Divorce is easy and a wife's betrayal is readily compensated by the payment of a small fine. It is obvious, therefore, that a Gond or Baiga who suspects his wife of infidelity is not put to anything like the same degree of provocation as that suffered by a Bison-horn Maria under similar circumstances.

Premeditation may be indicated by tribal customs. The Bison-horn Maria express the spirit of implacable revenge by certain dramatic symbols. They pull out their pubic hairs; they remove a few handfuls of grass from an enemy's roof; they whistle loudly the dreaded *sui* whistle. In any case where an accused is proved to have indulged in one or other of these acts, it may be assumed that his crime was premeditated.

A Bastar tragedy, the murder of Tati Hirme by her deceased husband's younger brother Doga, provides an interesting example of how a knowledge of local custom can explain an otherwise meaningless crime. According to tribal practice a younger brother has a right over his elder brother's widow, a right which extends not only to her person, but to her property. This right Tati Hirme refused to Doga, and there is evidence that for a long time the youth bitterly resented her behaviour. On the day of the tragedy he went to her house and asked her for some tobacco. She refused, and he murdered her.

At first sight here is precisely one of those motiveless crimes which have so often puzzled outside observers. It is true that there was hostility between the parties, but the refusal of a small gift of tobacco was hardly sufficient for so disastrous a result. But in Maria practice to ask a woman

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CHAPTER TWO

THE BISON-HORN MARIA

I

The so-called Maria of Bastar fall naturally into two divisions distinguished by many details of culture and tradition, the Hill Maria of the Abujhmar Mountains and the Bison-horn Maria living to the south of the Indrawati River. A full account of both these tribes has been given by W. V. Grigson, and his book should be read by those who wish to have a fuller background of Maria life than the present volume can supply. In this chapter I will only give a brief summary of the life and customs of the Bison-horn Maria.

The Bison-horn Maria, who are distinguished from the other aboriginals of Bastar by the splendid head-dress they use for their marriage dances, numbered about 156,000 in 1931, and I estimate their present strength at about 175,000. They are distributed all over southern Bastar, among the entrancing hills of Dantewara, in the dry forests of Bijapur, among the hot but lovely lowlands of Konta, in the remote Sukma and Kutru Zamindaris. On the borders of the main Maria stock are a number of communities which really belong to it, the Koya of the extreme south, the Dorla who claim to be a superior caste and the mixed population along the banks of the Indrawati and reaching up towards the Muria country beyond Barsur. The Dorla and Koya dance in Bison-horn Maria fashion; the mixed people to the north combine the customs of the Hill Maria with their own. In the neighbourhood of Jagdalpur, the Maria gradually lose their distinctiveness as they approach the town and merge into the southern Muria.

There are few people in India more attractive than the Bison-horn Maria, physically charming, of good stature, perfect figure, finely featured with carefully tended hair, often a lovely golden-brown in colour. Both men and women are very strong; the men can carry heavy loads great distances, endure long and arduous hunting expeditions and dance all night bearing their great drums. Their health is fairly good, but they are afflicted with yaws, though the work of the

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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but with a great variety of turns and changes: the 'bison' charge and fight each other, pick up rings or leaves on the points of their horns, and chase the girl dancers. The girls, each with a dancing-stick in her right hand, form a long line and go round and through the men dancers with many different movements and steps. They do not usually sing, and indeed the tune would be lost in the thunder of the drums. As they go, they beat the ground with their sticks *dum-dum-dum, di-dum, dum-dum.* Masked mummers, clowns dressed in straw, naked acrobats with enormous imitation genitalia, add to the gaiety of the scene. There is no finer dance in India.

The head-dress of bison horns is the chief treasure of a Maria home. It is kept with the utmost care, dismantled, in closed bamboo baskets, and it takes nearly an hour to assemble it. Horns are rare nowadays in Bastar and have to be imported from Jeypore. A Maria may give a bull in exchange for a pair of good horns; they should be white at the bottom turning to black half way up.

A bamboo frame forms the base of the head-dress. The horns are attached to the front and a great tuft of feathers rises behind. Cloth, often old and costly silk, is tied round and round and a tail hangs down behind. Across the front a fringe of cloth adorned with cowries covers the dancer's eyes.

The feathers used are those of the peacock and of domestic cocks specially castrated for the purpose. It is considered unlucky for a feather to fall to the ground during a dance, and before they begin the dancers address the Earth Mother and the Ancestors: 'Save us from the dangers of magic and let none of the feathers fall'.

A man's head-dress passes to his son or brother's son after his death. His bow and arrow and his drum are also heirlooms and are highly valued. The loss of a head-dress drove one Maria youth to suicide, and a dispute about possession of an outfit of buttocks-bells led another to murder.

In the north of the area, many Maria dance both with bison horns and in Hill Maria fashion. The latter wear the skirt, decorated cap and streamers, and buttocks-bells characteristic of the Abujhmar Hills.

The Maria are not very good at musical instruments. They use a small fiddle called *kikir*, a Jews-harp made of iron or

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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764 then thrown aside. It is very important that this grass should not be burnt. The aim of the rite was to ensure that the [194] man would be able to breathe on his journey to the next world, though other informants said that it was to allow the soul to escape. The brother-in-law of the dead man then lit a bundle of grass with fire brought from the house and after taking a turn round the pyre set fire to the pile of wood by the head. Another man went round in the opposite direction and fired the wood by the legs.

After the pyre was well alight, the whole company went to a stream and washed themselves. The grand-daughter soaked part of her sari in water and holding the wet portion in her hand came home and rinsed it out on the very place where the coffin had lain inside the house so that the dead man could drink it.

Early next morning, the dead man's son-in-law went to the cremation-ground to examine the ashes and there found an [754] earthen doll tied in a leaf-cup. This led the Waddai to declare that the death was due to black magic done by Bando and concealed by him in the jungle.

Later in the morning a cow was brought and its legs washed by the deceased's daughter-in-law. After touching its forehead with a little rice she said to it, 'We have given you your share, now don't make us suffer any longer'. One of the drum-beaters touched the cow with his stick and a marriage-relative killed it by a heavy blow with the blunt end of his axe. He then cut the tail, removed the liver and made it into twenty-four pieces in equal shares of six pieces each. Each share was wrapped up in a leaf and roasted. The party took these to the cremation-ground. On reaching the place some of the women picked out the bones from the pyre and kissed them. The dead man's son collected any half-burnt pieces of wood and kicked them towards the centre of the pyre. Then they cleared the ash where the corpse's head had been, cow-dunged the place and put the leaf-cups there.

The packets containing the liver were now opened and three pieces from each packet were placed on the ground and three in each of the leaf-cups. The twelve pieces on the ground were for the Earth and the twelve pieces in the leaf-cups for the Dead. The Waddai made seven piles of rice. He held a

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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Bison Horn Maria

CHAPTER THREE

THE STATISTICS OF VIOLENT CRIME

I

The Bison-horn Maria have long had a bad reputation for violence and drunkenness. But before this reputation is accepted as scientific fact we should examine the matter statistically and in detail. I will give first a Table which will show the total homicidal crimes in Bastar State under Sections 302 and 304 of the Indian Penal Code during the 10 years 1931 to 1940.

TABLE ONE

Number of homicide cases in Bastar State (under Sections 302 and 304 I.P.C.) for 10 years, 1931-40

	Bison-horn Maria	Ghotul Muria of the North	Others (whole State)	Total
1931	8	1	7	16
1932	14	3	10	27
1933	8	1	10	19
1934	19	2	16	37
1935	14	2	7	23
1936	8	—	14	22
1937	8	2	12	22
1938	13	2	13	28
1939	15	1	9	25
1940	14	7	18	39
Total ...	121	21	116	258

The next Table will relate these figures to the estimated population, both for the tribes and for the State.

The striking difference in the number of murders committed by the Bison-horn Maria and their neighbours, the Ghotul Muria, is probably to be explained by the fact that the Muria have in their Ghotul or dormitory system an ideal method of training the youth of the tribe in the civic virtues, in eliminating jealousy and in teaching everyone to live together as a family. Even the few murders that do take place among the Ghotul Muria occur, for the most part, in villages which

[1: 37]

-3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

X 674 184

TABLE TWO

Illustrating the relation of homicide cases to the estimated population

	Population in 1941	Annual average of homicides	Average annual incidence of homicides to the million[1]
Bison-horn Maria ...	175,000	12·1	69·14
Ghotul Muria ...	100,000	2·1	21·00
Others ...	360,000	11·6	32·22
Total ...	635,000	25·8	40·63

have for one reason or another lost their dormitories. 'Reformers' who would banish the dormitory from tribal India should very carefully consider this fact before they do so.

X 674 171 184 It is not easy to obtain comparative figures for other tribes or communities in India. There is a Maria (but not Bison-horn Maria) population in the Chanda District: here there were 26 cases of homicide in 10 years among a population of 34,776—which works out near the Bison-horn Maria figure of 69 to the million. In Mayurbhanj State, in 1935-36 there were 25 similar cases from a population of about 890,000 or about 28 to the million. In 1939, there were 184 persons found guilty under Sections 302 and 304 I.P.C. in the Central Provinces and Berar, which gives a figure of approximately 11 to the million. In the same Province, with its total population of some eighteen millions, 53 persons were sentenced to death and 131 to transportation in 1941. The figures for 1942 were 59 and 127.

X 674 171 Against these figures, the incidence of 69 homicides to the million among Bison-horn Maria seems very high, but it must be remembered that the inhabitants of the Central Provinces and the Eastern States are among the most peaceful people on this planet. Laubscher gives some comparative statistics from various parts of the world. The rate of homicide among South African Pagans was 171 per million in 1935. In 1924, Canada had a homicide rate of 15 per million. In 1926, the rate for England and Wales was 7 per million.

[1] Based on the population estimates for 1941.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

INTRODUCTION

101 NO aboriginal people of India has attained greater prominence on the political scene of past centuries than the large group of tribes commonly known by the generic term Gond. When the mist that still veils long periods in the history of the Deccan finally lifts, Gonds appear not only as the main population of wide areas in the very heart of India, described after them as Gondwana, but also as a ruling race equal in power and material status to many contemporary Hindu princes. Lacking unity and leadership the Gond states collapsed before the successive onslaughts of Moghul and Maratha armies, but the Gond populations remained, the old feudal system continued to function in [21] many remote tracts and several Gond rajas enjoy up to this day the status of ruling chiefs. But besides the advanced sections of the Gonds who vied with Hindus in the fields of war and statesmanship, there were and still are the great masses of primitive peasants and forest dwellers on a cultural level no higher than that of other aboriginal populations in the Central Indian zone. Of their economics, social organization and religion, historical sources tell us next to nothing, and the study of Gond culture, as a distinct element in the culture pattern of India, falls to the anthropologist, who finds an almost overwhelming wealth of material among the many vigorous branches of the Gond family.

184 101 [194] Spread over an area considerably larger than the British Isles and extending from the Godavari gorges in the south to the Vindhya Mountains in the north, the Gonds are neither racially, nor culturally, nor linguistically a homogeneous population. So great are the differences in custom and material circumstances between many of the widely scattered tribal groups that one may well wonder what causes them to be considered, and indeed to consider themselves, as members of the same race. Wherever we find Gonds, unless they are totally detribalized and merged with Hindu populations, they describe themselves as Gond or, if speaking Gondi, as Koitur, the universal equivalent of that name in all Gondi dialects. Were it not for those large groups of eastern Gonds, who speak Chhattisgarhi Hindi, the Gonds in the north-west of the Central Provinces, who speak western Hindi and the far smaller groups of Telugu speaking Gonds, better known as Koyas, in Hyderabad and Madras Presidency, it would probably be most satisfactory to replace, at least in ethnological usage, the general name "Gond" by the term "Gondi speaking populations," thus leaving it open whether there exists such an entity as a Gond people or only a group of peoples who to-day speak related languages. Indeed, I believe that we shall fail in

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

our approach to the Gond problem—one of the cardinal problems of Deccan ethnology—unless we envisage the possibility that the tribes now known as Gonds, far from being the dispersed off-shoots of a once homogeneous people, attained a certain and very limited measure of cultural uniformity only when they came under the sway of the same dominant linguistic influence.

Gondi with its many local dialects is a Dravidian language of the so-called intermediate group, and stands, according to Grierson, closer to Tamil and Kanarese than to Telugu. But it seems highly improbable that the Dravidian tongues, which were no doubt associated with the representatives of the pre-Aryan high-civilizations of Southern India, should have been the original languages of tribal populations as primitive in racial and cultural make-up as the Hill Marias of Bastar and certain Koyas of Hyderabad. Just as such widely separated aboriginal tribes as the Chenchus of the Nallamallai Hills, the Hill Reddis of the Eastern Ghats and some, though not all, Naikpods and Kolams in the hills of Adilabad have adopted Telugu to the exclusion of any other tongue, without anyone considering Telugu as their original language[1] or claiming the present linguistic uniformity as proof of a genetic connection between all those tribes, so the peoples now speaking Gondi may, in times past, have abandoned older tribal tongues in favour of a Dravidian language spoken by neighbouring populations or the members of a ruling class. J. H. Hutton believes that by a similar process the Oraons of Chota Nagpur have adopted their present Dravidian tongue[2] in place of a Munda language, and I fully agree with his assumption that a large-scale Dravidianization of aboriginal tribes occurred partly previous and partly parallel to the Aryanization of which we are still witnesses.[3]

The idea that Dravidian Gondi represents a comparatively recent element in the linguistic pattern of the Central Indian belt has already been voiced by R. V. Russell, who put forward the theory of a Gond incursion into the Central Provinces from the south between the ninth and the thirteenth century A.D. This probably goes too far and is not supported by ethnological evidence; in solving the language problem it is not even necessary to assume a wholesale migration of all the Gond tribes from Dravidian lands south of the Godavari to the Central Provinces and the hill-tracts of Bastar. It is sufficient to postulate the invasion of a people limited in numbers but superior to the older tribal folks in organization and material equipment, and the subsequent spread of its Dravidian language and perhaps certain elements of its culture among the tribes previously speaking one or several older tongues. Indian history provides numerous examples of such an imposition of a foreign

1. In the case of Naikpods and Kolams an older tribal language is still spoken by other groups.
2. Oraon belongs to the same intermediate group as Gondi.
3. *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Part I, p. 398.